

HOME RULE & THE LABOUR MARKET.

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

WILLIAM, A HOME RULER,

AND

JOHN, A UNIONIST.

J.—I see that Mr. Wilson has been telling the Durham miners that Home Rule will keep Irish competition out of the English labour market ; and that, therefore, Home Rule will be a blessing to the English working-man. Why does Mr. Wilson think Home Rule will do this ?

W.—Because he says that Home Rule will make Ireland so prosperous that she will be able to afford work for all her own people.

J.—And why do you feel so certain Home Rule will do this ?

W.—Of course it will. When people are contented and happy they are sure to be prosperous.

J.—Will they be contented to pay the immense tribute that is going to be imposed upon them ? Will they be contented to pay the interest on the £113,000,000 which will be wanted to buy out those landlords who they have always said don't deserve anything at all ? Will they be content to pay for a civil and judicial service, and police twice over, once to act and once by way of compensation ? Will they be content to bear a share of that National Debt which they declare was incurred not in their interests, but rather against their interests ? Will they be content to contribute to an army and navy which the English Home Rulers are always boasting can be used against Ireland when necessary ?

W.—Yes. I think they will feel the sum you call tribute a very reasonable contribution towards the expenses of the Empire. Besides, when they have developed the resources of Ireland it won't be a very large proportion of their wealth.

J.—But do you know how they propose to develop the resources of Ireland ?

W.—Oh, I suppose by patient industry.

J.—No, I fear not ; but by employing the worn-out dodges of Protection. Those who know best say that since the Bill will not let them impose customs duties, they are going back to the good old system of bounties, a system which, you may remember

was a favourite with Grattan's Parliament. There will be bounties, out of the tax-payers' moneys, paid to all kinds of manufactures. Besides that, they are eager to begin great drainage and improvement works which will never pay. What will be the result of all this? Poverty for Ireland. We English have learnt the lessons of Free Trade well enough to know that such fostering of industries and such schemes of public works have only one end—Financial Ruin. The whole country will be sunk in the depths of misery and destitution, and we shall be deluged, not with the ordinary number of Irish workmen, but with a double or a treble tide. Home Rule must infallibly make Ireland poorer, and the poorer Ireland is, the more her people will be forced on our shores in search of work. I think I can illustrate the truth of this by what is beginning even now. You know in these days you can get no great employment for Labour without Capital. You know, too, that Capital is shy of experiments in government. What capitalists, do you think, are going to put money into Ireland if Mr. Healy or Mr. O'Brien is Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer? Not one. All Irish Securities are falling. Some have fallen 19 per cent. already, and people who have money in Ireland are beginning to get it out of the country. If this is so merely on the threat of Home Rule, what will happen on the actual establishment of a Parliament in Dublin?

W.—Oh, I think that is a scare of yours.

J.—Well, then, if you are not satisfied, look at it in this way: The landlords are all afraid of Home Rule, and will leave Ireland when they have got their share of the £113,000,000.

W.—Stop a minute. I don't go in for the Land Bill; that won't pass.

J.—Excuse me; it will. Mr. Gladstone has said—has he not?—that the two Bills are “inseparable.” You don't suppose that Mr. Gladstone will go back from his word, do you?

W.—Well, no; I don't think or wish that, of course.

J.—We may take it, then, that the landlords will all be bought out; for if Home Rule passes, the Conservatives will join with the Moderate Liberals to pass the Land Bill. So then the rent of Ireland will, with very few exceptions, go out of Ireland. Now, in a country like Ireland this will mean that a vast number of Irishmen wishing to find employment will have to follow this money into England. Labour competition, begun in one place, will be felt in all; and I dare assert with absolute confidence that **Home Rule, instead of withdrawing Irishmen from the English labour market, will, in a very short time, have sent down wages and injured the prospects of labour in half the trades in England.**